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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of alienation among alternatively and traditionally certified teachers. A total of 228 teachers in grades K-12 from a public university offering both traditional certification (TC) and cooperative alternative certification (AC) graduate programs were assessed using the School Alienation Scale to determine their perceptions of isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness within their school work environment. AC teachers were found to be significantly less isolated than TC teachers. This may be attributed to their relative inexperience as teachers as well as their current participation in a cohort program that provides some level of insulation from the alienating effects of schools. Other comparisons between AC and TC teachers found insignificant differences in levels of normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and total alienation. This shows that AC and TC teachers share similar perceptions of school alienation. Despite the insignificant differences between AC and TC teachers in three out of four alienation constructs, the high levels of alienation provide further support for the existence of what previous researchers described as the confinement from one another of teachers to isolated classrooms and alienating work conditions. (Contains 38 references.) (Author/SM)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of alienation among alternatively and traditionally certified teachers. Two hundred and twenty-eight teachers (grades K-12) from a public university offering both traditional certification (TC) and a cooperative alternative certification (AC) graduate programs were assessed using the School Alienation Scale (SAS) to determine their perceptions of isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness within their school work environment. AC teachers were found to be significantly less isolated than TC teachers. This may be attributed to their relative inexperience as teachers as well as their current participation in a cohort program that provides some level of insulation from the alienating effects of schools. Other comparisons between AC and TC teachers found insignificant differences in levels of normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness and total alienation. This shows that AC and TC teachers share similar perceptions of school alienation. Despite the insignificant differences between AC and TC teachers in three of the four alienation constructs, the high levels of alienation provide further support for the existence of what Lortie (1975) and Jackson (1968) described as the confinement from one another of teachers to isolated classrooms and alienating work conditions (LeCompte and Dworkin, 1991).

A Comparison of Alienation among Alternatively and Traditionally Certified Teachers

In recent years, state lawmakers have developed educational policies to enhance the recruitment of teachers in critical shortage areas such as mathematics, science, special education, foreign languages, and bilingual education (Shen, 1997; Stoddart & Floden, 1995; Feistritzer, 1993). One of the most politically popular policies to recruit new teachers has been alternative certification (AC) programs (Dill, 1996; James & McNiece, 1991).

As documented, AC programs have grown across the United States throughout the 1980's and 1990's (Dill, 1996; Feistritzer, 1993). According to Bradshaw (1998), all states have some form of AC programs, although Feistritzer (1997) has documented only 42 states having AC programs. The discrepancy in the number of states having AC programs may be due to how AC programs are defined. Feistritzer (1997) identified eight types of AC programs around the country. While as others have discovered, AC programs vary from state to state and are broadly defined as anything other than the traditional university teacher education program (Bradshaw, 1998; Stoddart & Floden, 1995; Zumwalt, 1991; Hawley, 1990).

In Texas, AC programs produce approximately 20% of all certified teachers annually (Littleton & Larmer, 1998). For prospective Texas teachers, there are three avenues for gaining teacher certification (two being non-traditional). Besides the traditional university program, prospective teachers can be certified through an alternative program from educational region service centers, or via a special school district specific teaching permit which allows individuals to teach only in the school district that provides the permit. The teaching permit specifies that unless the individual is to be employed in career or technology education, the individual must have a baccalaureate degree. This last alternative route is likely to be controversial if teacher shortages continue and school districts are unable to fulfill teaching positions with certified personnel from traditional and/or alternative programs.

According to proponents, AC programs have numerous benefits: 1) AC programs introduce competition and reduce the monopoly of traditional teacher certification (TC) programs

(Bliss, 1990); 2) the rise of AC programs reflects a general dissatisfaction with TC programs (Feistritzer, 1997; Stoddart & Floden, 1995); 3) AC programs raise teacher quality by recruiting people with stronger academic knowledge (Stoddart & Floden, 1995); and 4) AC programs help diversify the teaching force (Shen, 1997).

In addition to the benefits cited above, Stoddart (1993) found AC teachers have higher expectations of low income and minority students, were less likely to use drill and practice teaching, and were more committed to developing responsive instructional practices to meet the needs of the students. Furthermore, AC teachers were found to have higher standardized test scores and grade point averages than TC teachers (Bradshaw & Hawk, 1996).

In contrast, opponents of AC programs contend that: 1) AC programs lower the cost of entering education as a profession (Bradshaw, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1990); 2) degrades the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 1990); 3) incorrectly assumes that subject matter knowledge produces effective teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1990); and 4) provides substandard training (Neumann, 1994). Furthermore, Shen (1997) (with the use of the Schools and Staffing Survey 1993-1994 (SASS93)) found that AC programs generally did not fulfill its promise. In particular, AC teachers had lower academic qualifications and AC programs were seen as a means for fresh college graduates to circumvent TC programs. Accordingly, Natriello (1992) felt AC programs were "an idea that has been widely adopted well ahead of evidence of its effectiveness" (p. 7). Initially viewed as a short-term fix to teacher shortages, AC programs have become institutionalized (Stoddart & Floden, 1995).

For some researchers, AC programs provide quality options for individuals who originally did not intend to pursue teaching as a career (Zumwalt, 1996, Stoddart & Floden, 1995). In order to co-exist effectively and for the benefit of all students, Zumwalt (1996) noted that AC programs must not undermine current efforts to improve the statue of professional teachers. In other words, while AC competes with TC for students, AC programs must never allow market forces to lower its academic requirements or compromise its pedagogical standards to attract applicants.

As stated earlier, one of the main reasons for developing AC programs was to alleviate teacher shortages. In this respect, an examination of AC programs must address the central question: Is alternative certification a viable route towards alleviating teacher shortages? According to Shen (1997), AC teachers did not view teaching as a lifelong career. Coupled with lower academic qualifications, Shen (1997) concluded that "AC policy is likely to exacerbate teacher attrition. In the long run, the argument of alleviating teachers shortages through AC appears to be self-defeating" (p. 281).

In support of Shen's conclusion, Littleton and Larmer (1998) found AC teachers in Texas had lower overall retention rates than TC teachers (62.1% for AC v. 66.8% for TC). However, among African American teachers, AC teachers had higher retention rates than TC teachers (72.2% for AC v. 65.7% for TC). This result indicates further investigation needs to be conducted to determine what are the causes of AC attrition rates. Is it related to the AC program or something experienced by all teachers?

Given Shen's data, the linkage between AC programs and high teacher attrition rates is at best tentative. Until further research determines a stronger attributional connection to AC programs and teacher attrition, Shen's conclusion should not be accepted unquestionably.

To date, research on AC programs has been scant and inconclusive (Feistritzer, 1994; Rubino, 1994). Most of the studies have been descriptive and/or qualitative in nature. The few empirical studies on AC have focused on comparisons involving academic qualifications and demographical characteristics of participants in AC and TC programs. Few studies have investigated the effect of AC programs on student learning, teacher attrition or its correlates like teacher alienation. As a result, AC studies have been limited in determining their effectiveness (Shen, 1997).

In the past, AC teacher attrition has been investigated strictly from an input/output model. As a result, little is known about what AC teachers experience in their work environment. To this extent, an investigation into potential covariates of AC teacher attrition would be informative. One

of the covariates often mentioned with teacher attrition is teacher alienation (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991). If teacher alienation is connected in a meaningful way to teacher attrition, then the question arises, do AC teachers perceive school alienation differentially from TC teachers? AC teachers are often perceived by TC teachers as outsiders who haven't pay their full dues. This perception is exacerbated by the continuing shortage of teachers. AC teachers often receive signing bonuses as a recruiting tool to attract teachers in high demand areas. Unfortunately, these bonuses add to the perception of many TC teachers that AC teachers receive special treatment from the system. This negative perception may fan the flames of professional jealousy to create a barrier to professional collegiality. This perception whether true or not, may create a disjuncture for AC teachers between their expectations and actual experiences of professional collegiality (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991), and produce conditions for alienation to exist. It is through this disjuncture that this study examined alienation between AC and TC teachers' perceptions.

Teacher alienation has been examined from multiple perspectives, methodologically and conceptually. A number of studies have examined specific variables related to teacher alienation. Alienation studies involving perceptions of teachers have focused on school culture (Lortie, 1975; Jackson, 1968); school organizational power structures (Strauss, 1974); gender (Calabrese & Anderson, 1986); structure and organizational of schools and its effect on teachers (Tye, 1987; Forsyth & Hoy, 1978); teachers' years of experience (Calabrese & Fisher, 1988); teacher burnout (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991); and special education teachers (Shoho, Katims, & Meza, 1998). To date, there have been no documented studies examining teacher alienation based on type of teacher certification program undertaken.

In defining alienation, there is little consensus among psychologists, sociologists and educators as to its meaning and causes in an organizational setting (Forsyth & Hoy, 1978). Using a sociological approach, this study viewed alienation as a collection of operationally defined constructs which could be empirically measured subjectively through self-reports of respondents. Seeman (1959) originally defined alienation as an affective construct consisting of five variables:

isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement, whereas Dean (1961) used isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness to define alienation. For the purpose of this study, school alienation utilized four constructs: isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness.

Isolation represents a feeling of being alone. Isolated teachers feel disconnected to others in their work environment. Normlessness is associated with a person who has a different and often conflicting perspective of the normative school value structure. Normless teachers perceive themselves, and believe others perceive in a negative sense. Powerlessness represents an inability to influence one's choices. Powerless teachers often give up at the first sign of resistance. Instead of trying harder, powerless teachers tend to rationalize any effort to achieve a certain goal as a waste of time. And meaninglessness was used to assess whether a teacher felt their job had intrinsic meaning. Teachers who display traits of meaninglessness tend to lack a sense of personal accomplishment in what they do.

Alienation has been viewed as a situational construct describing the relationship between an individual and their environment (Dean, 1961). Situational factors provide one explanation for why someone may be alienated in one context but not in another (Avi-Itzhak, 1987). Another way to conceptualize alienation is to view it from a personal and institutional perspective. On a personal level, the relationship involving alienation and the individual can be characterized bilaterally. Depending on the context, an individual can be the initiator or recipient of alienating circumstances. As a result, being alienated has differential effects on individuals depending on the context and may not adversely affect each individual in the same way (e.g., some of the greatest human minds have chosen to alienate themselves from society). Consequently, teacher alienation in the context of this study may not be dependent on the type of certification program they experienced.

From an institutional perspective, the relationship between the institution and the individual tends to be more unilateral with the individual being a recipient of alienating situations created by institutional factors. In other words, the institutional structure may affect individual behavior

adversely (Senge, 1990). And while alienation is ultimately a personal phenomena, institutional factors can contribute to the adverse effects of alienation (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). This may be a more likely explanation if AC and TC teachers experience similar alienation levels.

The purpose of this study was to examine the alienation levels among AC and TC teachers. Specifically, this study sought to assess whether AC and TC teachers felt differentially alienated in their school setting. If AC teachers experience higher or lower levels of alienation than TC teachers, the implications for policy decisions affecting AC program design, teacher recruitment and retention would be potentially substantial. Specifically, if Shen (1997) is correct in concluding that AC programs contribute to higher attrition rates among teachers, then AC programs may be undermining their initial purpose to alleviate teacher shortages. On the other hand, if AC and TC teacher have similar high levels of alienation, then this would suggest that school environments and not program certification is the primary alienating factor. In either case, a review may warrant redesign of AC programs or the restructuring of schools to better alleviate the teacher alienation that leads to attrition.

Methods

Participants

Two hundred and twenty-eight teachers participated in this study. Of the two hundred and twenty-eight participants, 142 (62%) were teachers involved in a master's degree cooperative alternative certification program between a local educational region service center and a public university, while 86 (38%) were teachers who were traditionally certified and enrolled in an educational leadership master's degree program at the same university.

The AC teacher sample represented 91.61% of the population available at the time, while TC teachers represented 97.72% of the randomly sampled clusters (i.e., courses) who were enrolled in the educational leadership program. As required by the alternative certification program, all students were required to have bachelor's degrees and be currently employed in a K-12 public school setting. Table 1 illustrates demographical characteristics collected from study participants.

The AC program under investigation involved a thirteen month process where cohort groups are formed each fall. To be eligible for the AC program, a person must secure a teaching appointment from a school district and have a bachelor's degree in an applicable field. The AC program requires all teachers to meet two full Saturdays a month and attend courses each semester for three semesters on pedagogy and related teaching methods. In addition, AC teachers must meet weekly with their cohort group to discuss issues related to their teaching experiences. AC teachers must also be assigned a mentor teacher by their employing school district. Upon completion, AC teachers are given the necessary approvals to take the state mandated teaching certification test and if they pass, a regular teaching certificate is awarded.

Instrument

The School Alienation Scale (SAS) (Shoho, 1997) is a 40-item five point Likert scale which was been used to assess levels of alienation with a variety of school populations ranging from adolescent special education students to teachers. The instrument is divided into four subscales: isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness. The cumulative score of the four subscales comprise a total alienation score. The possible range of scores for the instrument are: Isolation, 10 - 50; Normlessness, 10 - 50; Powerlessness, 10 - 50; Meaninglessness, 10 - 50; and Total Alienation, 40 - 200. Higher scores on the SAS represent higher levels of the construct being measured.

The validity of SAS was determined by a review panel of national experts in education, psychology, and sociology who have conducted studies involving alienation. The internal reliability of the instrument is currently being assessed with a large data set through factor analyses and the determination of a coefficient of internal consistency for each subscale. External reliability analyses indicates that scores on the SAS are highly correlated to established instruments like the Dean Alienation Scale (1961).

Procedures

All participants were given the SAS to complete. The demographic data collected included the subject's certification type, gender, ethnicity, age, teaching experience, and grade level. The instrument was given to all attending participants on the day of administration in either randomly selected clusters of master's level educational leadership courses or in an alternative certification program at a public university. Participants who missed the day of administration were given the opportunity to complete the instrument the following class period. After administration, each instrument was scored and entered into an EXCEL spreadsheet and then converted to an SPSS file for data analysis.

Results

Alienation scores from study participants were obtained using the SAS. The dependent variables measured were isolation, normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and a cumulative score indicating total alienation. The independent variables analyzed were certification program (alternative versus traditional), gender, ethnicity, age, years of teaching experience, and grade level. Alienation scores were analyzed using general linear modeling multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) factorial techniques. The predetermined level of significance used for the present study was $p \leq .05$. Data analyses revealed the following major findings:

1. AC teachers reported significantly lower levels of isolation than TC teachers.

2. There were no significant differences in normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness and total alienation levels between AC and TC teachers.

3. There were no significant differences in alienation levels involving gender, ethnicity, age, years of experience, and grade level.

All major findings were related to type of certification (i.e., AC v. TC). The multivariate F ratio for determining alienation differences between teachers in alternative and traditional programs was found to be statistically significant (Wilk's lambda, $F = 3.561$, $df = 4, 223$, $p = .008$). This

indicates a significant difference existed among teachers from AC and TC programs in at least one of the five dependent measures involving alienation. Subsequent analyses of the data using one factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) factorial techniques revealed that AC teachers reported significantly lower levels of isolation and insignificant differences in normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and total alienation versus TC teachers. Table 2 illustrates the means and standard deviations of the dependent variables for AC and TC teachers.

The only statistically significant finding involved an one-way ANOVA examining the isolation construct. Based on the data, AC teachers reported significantly lower levels of isolation than TC teachers ($F(1, 226) = 11.169$, $p = .001$). This result indicates that AC teachers felt less isolated than TC teachers. This may be partially due to the cohort structure of the alternative certification program. The structure of the AC program may provide AC teachers with an insulates them from the ills of alienation, while in contrast, TC teachers have no formal institutional structure to minimize feelings of isolation. For most TC teachers, interactions among colleagues tends to be less structured and focused on educational issues.

Further analyses found insignificant differences between AC and TC teachers in normlessness, $F(1, 226) = .091$, $p = .763$), powerlessness, ($F(1, 226) = 1.544$, $p = .215$); meaninglessness ($F(1, 226) = .325$, $p = .569$), or total alienation score ($F(1, 226) = 3.512$, $p = .062$). These findings put together as a whole, show that AC teachers had similar perceptions of alienation as TC teachers. That is, AC and TC teachers appear to share similar normative value structures, a common sense of control over their work environment, and an equivalent perception of what their purpose is. It should be noted that while there were no statistically significant differences between AC and TC teachers involving levels of normlessness, powerlessness, meaninglessness, and total alienation, their recorded scores were relatively high and may be indicative an institutional structure that fosters a sense of alienation among all teachers.

Discussion

Recent investigations of AC programs have focused on the degree to which AC programs alleviate or exacerbate teacher shortages. This study does not resolve this issue, but it represents an initial step toward understanding the working environment of both AC and TC teachers. This understanding is important not only to educators, but to the community at-large because teacher alienation indirectly affects the quality of education in schools. The more alienated teachers feel, the less likely they are to be effective and the more likely they are to leave the profession.

This study produced two major findings. First, AC teachers felt significantly less isolated in their work environment than TC teachers. The dissimilarity in isolation perceptions between AC and TC may be explained by several factors. The difference in years of teaching experience may be a confounding variable that explains why AC teachers had a lower level of isolation than TC teachers. On average, AC teachers had less than two years of teaching experience while TC teachers had just under nine years of experience. As a result of the differentiation years of experience, AC teachers may have a heighten sense of idealism often associated with beginning teachers toward their job versus the more experienced realism perspective of TC teachers. This is consistent with what others have found (Stafford & Barrow, 1994). Another reason that AC teachers are less isolated may be attributed to the institutional support of their ongoing participation in the AC program. As part of the AC program outlined in the methods section, AC teachers are afforded an institutional structure that supports their professional development. With the collegial and mentor support, AC teachers have an institutional structure that counteracts the professional isolation often associated with teaching. It is unclear whether AC teachers after they complete the AC program experience similar levels of isolation as TC teachers.

The second major finding showed that AC and TC teachers had similar perceptions of normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness in their school environments. These insignificant differences revealed the levels of normlessness, powerlessness, and meaninglessness to be high for both groups. As a consequence, these high levels of alienation for both groups

support what Shoho, et. al. (1998) and Bronfenbrenner (1974) contend is an institutional structure that fosters a sense of alienation among all teachers. It is also consistent with Jackson's (1968) and Lortie's (1975) description of the teaching profession as one involving high degrees of isolation, i.e., alienation. This result has widespread implications for the teaching profession, specifically, in the recruitment, training, and retention of teachers. Given the findings of this study, how can schools and their leaders alleviate or at least minimize teacher alienation.

Teacher alienation may be addressed in numerous ways within the school structure, however, the key to minimizing teachers' perceptions of alienation is to create organizational structures where teachers become apart of the deep structure within schools (Tye, 1987). For school leaders, the first step towards alleviating teacher alienation is to recognize the existence of alienating structures and policies within schools. Unless school leaders recognize teacher alienation as a problem and take measures to minimize its adverse effects, teacher marginalization and attrition are likely to remain problematic.

Eisner (1992) argues that for meaningful and educationally significant school reform to occur, five dimensions of schooling must be addressed: the intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical and evaluative. From Eisner's perspective, unless a comprehensive perspective toward identifying and examining the central problem of teacher alienation is undertaken, any attempt to resolving the problem would be synonymous to tinkering along the edges.

Based on the results of this study, there is little evidence to conclusively suggest that the type of certification program had any major effect on perceptions of teacher alienation. Hence, it is unlikely that anything inherently associated with AC programs contributed to the problem of teacher attrition as Shen (1997) suggests. As this study illustrated, all teachers felt alienated in school, irregardless of the type of certification program. Consequently, the attrition of AC and TC teachers is probably not due to their certification preparation program, in as much as it is related to the working environment of schools. If this is true, then school leaders must be more sensitive and creative in designing learning organizations with associating infrastructures where teachers feel less

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alienated and more empowered to carry out their passion for teaching.

Based on past studies and the results of this study, it is recommended that future attrition rates of AC teachers be investigated on a state by state basis. Since AC programs vary widely from state to state and within states, it would be unwise to lump the results of this or any other AC study together and generalize to all AC programs. To minimize this from happening, AC programs should be properly described in detail as part of reporting studies to avoid a "lumping together as a whole" effect.

Another recommendation would be for future investigations to rely on higher order statistical analyses with the use of longitudinal quasi-experimental or experimental designs to evaluate AC programs. By using general linear and hierarchical models, researchers may be able to determine which variables are accurate covariates of teacher attrition, instead of relying on untested linkages between variables.

And lastly, as the amount of AC programs continue to grow and more teachers become certified through alternative means, it is imperative to study the effects of AC programs beyond teacher characteristics. To this end, AC programs must ultimately be assessed within the parameters of current accountability standards involving issues of student learning. The bottom line for alternative certification programs is do they produce teachers who not only alleviate the teacher shortage problem,but provide effective instruction that translates into quality student learning. The answer this issue should ultimately determine if alternative certification programs are a viable option to traditional teacher preparation programs. Conversely, traditional certification programs should be held to the same standards.

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Table 1

Frequency and Percent of Selected Demographic Characteristics of Alternatively (AC) and Traditionally Certified (TC) Teachers (N = 228)

Characteristics	AC	TC
Gender		
Female	91(64%)	67(77%)
Male	51(36%)	19(23%)
Ethnicity		
African American	13(9%)	3(3%)
Anglo	70(49%)	51(59%)
Hispanic	52(37%)	30(35%)
Other	7(5%)	2(2%)
Grade Level		
Elementary	71(50%)	44(51%)
Middle	44(31%)	21(24%)
High	27(19%)	21(24%)
Average Age	34.83	35.58
Years of Experience	1.87	8.73

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Alternatively (AC) versus Traditionally (TC) Certified Teachers

	Total Alienation		Isolation*		Normlessness		Powerlessness		Meaninglessness	
Group	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Traditional	158.38	14.63	38.30	5.53	38.26	3.46	40.69	4.34	40.64	5.56
Alternative	154.28	16.79	36.04	6.31	38.1	3.47	39.91	4.71	40.21	5.46

Note. The number of traditional and alternatively certified teachers was 86 and 142, respectively.

*$p < .001$